Discussion with EU on basmati import and sugar export

2467. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the issues for retaining duty free quota of basmati rice imports and to restore the quota for duty free sugar exports were raised by India with the European Union delegation recently in New Delhi;

(b) whether the WTO liberalisation was to avoid trade distortions but after having adopted common principle on world trade there is a need for special and differential treatment of developing countries; and

(c) if so, what were the decisions taken in the meeting?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVUAY SINGH): (a) to (c) Yes Sir. Multilateral and bilateral issues relating to agriculture including the issues of export of basmati rice and sugar were raised with the Commissioner for Agriculture of the European Union (EU) during his visit to India and also in the India-EC Joint Commission meeting held in New Delhi in February 2001. The European Commission took note of India's concerns for appropriate consideration on issues relating to export of basmati rice and sugar.

The WTO Agreement on Agriculture aims at establishing a fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system by providing for substantial progressive reductions in agricultural support and protection resulting in correcting and preventing restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets. Further, to ensure fair and equitable benefits to the developing countries, Special and Differential (S and D) treatment clauses have been incorporated in various Agreements under the WTO including in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture. During the discussions with Commissioner for Agriculture, India had emphasised the need for further strengthening of the Special and Differential treatment clauses during the ongoing negotiations in agriculture so as to, *inter alia,* enable the developing countries to take care of the food security and livelihood concerns.

Foreign tours of ITPO officials

† 2468. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether crores of rupees of the country are spent on foreign tours of

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

senior officers in India Trade Promotion Organisation (Bhartiya Vyapar Sauvardhan Sanstha) by setting aside all the rules;

(b) if so, the names of countries these officers have visited so far and total expenditure incurred thereon; and

(c) the concrete steps Government are taking to put restriction on the foreign tours of the officers of this organisation to save the crores of rupees of country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVU AY SINGH): (a) As the premier trade promotion agency of the Government of India, India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), undertakes various trade promotion activities abroad such as organisation of exclusive Indian Trade Shows, participation in general/specialized commodity fairs, Buyer Seller Meets, Contact Promotion Programmes, Product Promotion Programmes, Catalogue shows, Market Surveys etc. ITPO organised 59 events abroad in 1999-2000,56 events in 2000-2001 and 13 events in the first quarter of the current financial year. These programmes are arranged after approval of the Exhibition Advisory Committee in the Department of Commerce. It becomes necessary to depute minimum required number of officials to manage various organizational activities connected with the events *i.e.* supervision of construction/decoration, arranging timely clearance of exhibits and their display in the Pavilion, coordinating visits of the buyers and their meetings with the Indian Counterparts.

(b) During 2000-2001, ITPO incurred an expenditure of Rs. 418.35 lakhs (provisional) on deputation of officers abroad in connection with organising of above events. The countries where officials were deputed are Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Kuwait, Nepal, New Zealand, Panama, Philippines, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Taipei, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, UK, USA and Vietnam.

(c) Travelling abroad by officials of ITPO is essentiat to implement the various trade promotion programmes overseas and the same is in furtherance of the aims and objectives for which the organization has been set up. However, ITPO endeavours to depute minimum number of officials for each event with a view to economizing on expenditure.